

Semicolons, Colons, and Dashes

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Semicolons (;)

Semicolons are used to connect two independent clauses that are closely related. An independent clause must include a subject and a verb and will function as a complete sentence.

Example: Many animals live on the Brown's farm; horses and cows are the prized livestock.

One can also use semicolons to connect two independent clauses when the second clause contains a conjunctive adverb or a transition.

Example: The Browns built a large fence around the farm; **nevertheless**, the pigs managed to escape.

Semicolons can also be used to list items that already have commas including cities with their respective country and when listing first and last names together.

Example (cities): The Brown's farm sends their products all over the United States with their main consumers located in Raleigh, North Carolina; Atlanta, Georgia; Richmond, Virginia; and Columbia, South Carolina.

Example (names): Howard, Nancy; Schmidt, Johann; Gonzalez, Richard; and Gupta, Sangi all came to help the Browns rebuild their barn after the storm.

Colon (:)

A colon is used to connect two independent clauses when you want to accentuate the second clause.

Example: The old barn at the edge of the farm attracted many wild animals: Farmer Brown had even seen deer inside!

A colon can function as an equal sign with a dependent clause.

Example: For his birthday, Farmer Brown got what he always wanted: a bright red truck.

A colon can also be used with a quotation or list after an independent clause.

Example (quotation): Susie Brown, the daughter of Farmer Brown, pleaded with her father to buy geese for the farm: "If you buy me geese, I will feed them and take care of them every day and you won't have to worry about them!"

Example (list): Farmer Brown walked around his farm looking at all the livestock: horses, cows, pigs, goats, and rabbits.

Dash (--)

Used to accentuate or emphasize extra information more than if you used just parentheses.

Example: The pumpkins in Farmer Brown's field are large--some might even say ginormous!

Works Consulted:

Purdue University Online Writing Lab (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>); Towson University Writing Center (<https://webapps.towson.edu/ows/>); *The Everyday Writer*, 5th ed. (Lunsford)